

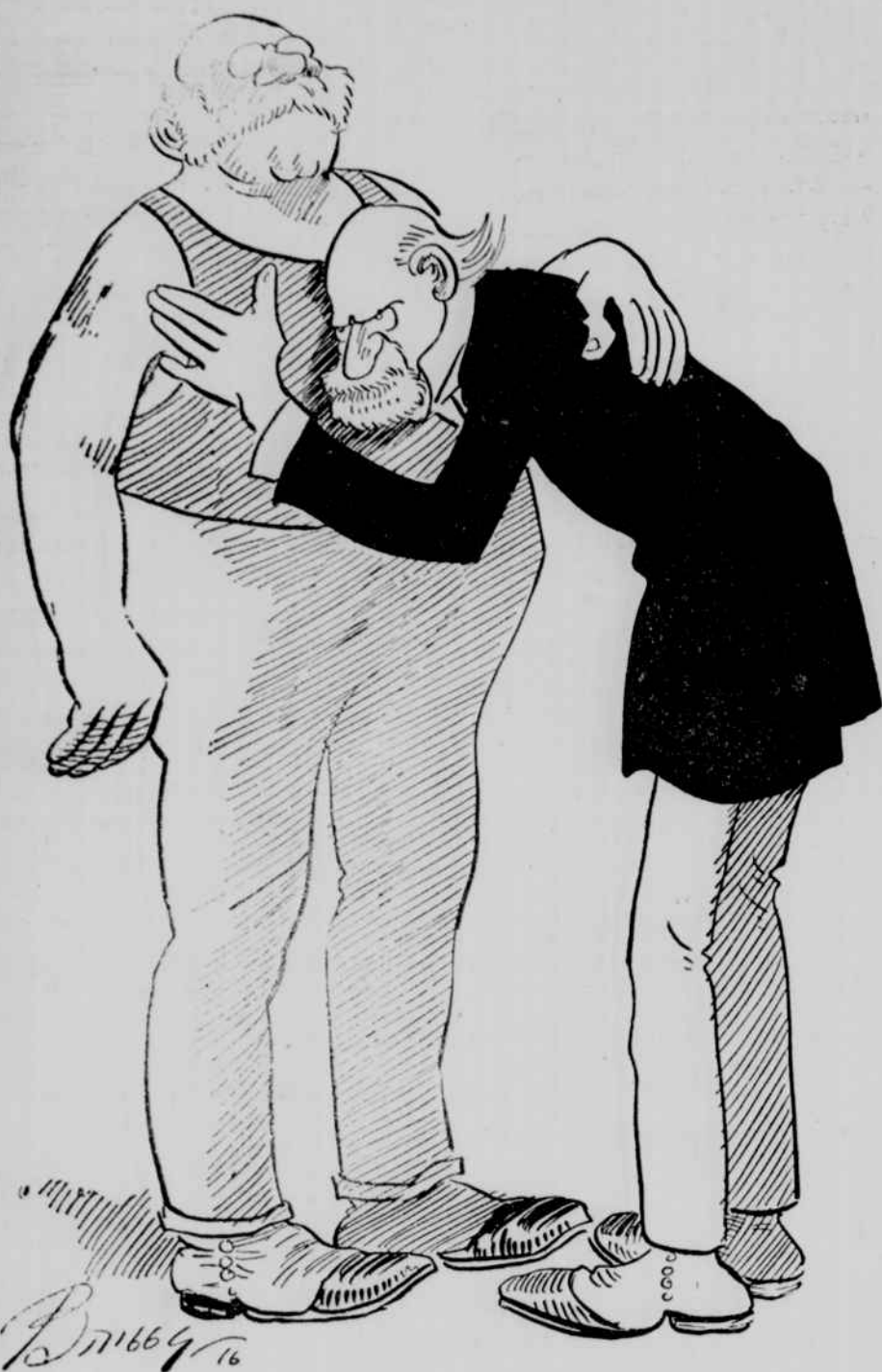
# WHO STARTED THIS AMERICANISM? THEY ALL DID

*"But if I Would Be a Politician, Birsky," Says Zapp, "I Wouldn't Got Nothing to Do Mit No Isms—That Feller, Bryan, for Instance, Has Had Ism After Ism Till He's Got One Foot in the Political Grave."*

By MONTAGUE GLASS

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Illustrations by Briggs



"They sound him for capitalism."

"I SEE where Wilson, Hughes and Roosevelt all claim they started this here Americanism business," Louis Birsky, the real estate, said to Barnett Zapp, the waist manufacturer.

"Well, if I was any one of 'em," Zapp said, "I'd *schenk* the credit for it to any of the others, Birsky, because if I would be a politician, Birsky, I wouldn't got nothing to do mit no isms. Once a politician oder a statesman starts to monkey with an ism like unionism, socialism, militarism oder Americanism, Birsky, for all the good it's going to do him, it might just so well be an itis like appendicitis, tonsillitis, bronchitis oder peritonitis. Take William J. Bryan, for instance, and that feller has had ism after ism till he's already got one foot in a political grave. Speaking from the standpoint of politics, he is now being taken round in a wheel chair, and when a seemingly strong, healthy feller like Mr. Wilson meets him on the street and goes home and says to Mrs. Wilson at dinner: 'I seen old Mr. Bryan in front of the drug store this afternoon, Mommer. Ain't it terrible what creeping pacificism has done to that feller?' Mrs. Wilson nods and says would he have another plate soup and dismisses it like that, Birsky, because little does she suspect that her own husband has already got the beginnings of acute Americanism in his system."

"Is Americanism so terrible as all that?" Birsky asked.

"It ain't quite understood as yet, Birsky," Zapp replied. "The only thing they know about it is that it's very catching. Roosevelt got it first. On June 8th he telegraphed Senator Jackson at the Republican Convention in Chicago that he had it, and had it good, and in the early part of June President Wilson comes down with it in Washington and later describes the symptoms to the West Point graduates. He said that when a feller has got Americanism he utterly believes in the principles of America and puts 'em first above everything, y'understand. Now you know as well as I do, Birsky, how it is when you get ahold of a patent medicine adver-

tisement about floating specks and pain in the back, Birsky. So soon as Hughes read about how Americanism affects Mr. Wilson, y'understand, he got white to the roots of his hair, Birsky, which when Mr. Hughes gets white to the roots of his hair, Birsky, the whiteness covers considerable territory already. Therefore he knew right away that not only did he have Americanism but that he had had it for years already, and on June 10th he telegraphs the Republican Convention that he accepted the nomination but couldn't come to Chicago as he had Americanism mit firm, protective, upbuilding policies and also probably mit shooting pains in the wrists and ankles, loss of appetite and dizziness.

"Aber without knocking socialism, y'understand, it's better that a politician should have Americanism as socialism, because in the whole continent of America, Zapp, there is only one or two climates where the politician mit socialism could get any relief. Unlike some other invalids a politician mit socialism couldn't go to a high, wild locality like the Adirondacks, but has got to find a low, thickly settled neighborhood to take his socialism to, otherwise it's fatal."

"You are all twisted, Birsky," Zapp said. "Socialism ain't a disease. It's a remedy for a disease, and the name of the disease is capitalism."

"To a politician, Zapp," Birsky said, "capitalism ain't a disease, Zapp, it's a health. In fact, Zapp, capitalism to a Senator is like a chest expansion to a soldier: he couldn't be accepted without it. New York State in particular is very strict that way. Before they would let a man be a United States Senator from New York, Zapp, they sound him for capitalism, and if he lets out a hollow sound they pass him up. The consequence is that for years already every Senator from New York has had a capitalism of anyhow a million dollars, which if you call such a thing a disease, Zapp, let me know where I could catch it,—that's all."

"Never mind, Birsky," Zapp said, "an ism is an ism, and capitalism is like all the others. The politician or states-

man which has it may look politically healthy for a while, but sooner or later it will get the most promising career, Birsky, the same as militarism will. Take the Kaiser, and several years ago when he begun to have it he also felt pretty good. In his case, the first symptoms was that he broke out all over in uniforms and he got himself appointed honorary colonel of so many regiments, domestic and foreign, that if he wore the uniforms in rotation, Birsky, he didn't get round to the same suit of clothes once in twenty-five years. It used to cost him a fortune for moth balls alone, and when he took off a pair of pants, he sent it round to the tailor and had a V put in the back against the time when he was going to wear 'em again. However, Birsky, he soon got tired of admiration, and it didn't make no difference that his wife tried to get him to take a fresh interest by saying: 'Turn round and let me see the back. I think that peplin effect of the 842nd Regiment Lippe-Schaumburg National Guard which you have on is awful becoming to

"Although it's usually the first stage of the trouble."

"The first and only stage in some cases, like old Mr. Bryan *olav hash-olom*," Zapp said, "aber with the Kaiser he seems to have got past that part of his ism. There was a time here about three years ago when you couldn't pick up a paper without reading how the Kaiser addressed the South Prussian, Wurttemberg and Rhein-Pfalz Commercial Travellers' Association or some such organization about the nailed fist oder the three K's or something, but nowadays the poor feller don't open his mouth at all."

"Why should he?" Birsky asked. "If every politician mit an ism would have his ism tried out on him the way the Kaiser has, Zapp, even fellers mit socialism would keep quiet. Take that speech which the Kaiser used to get off a few years ago about women should attend to the three K's—*Kirche, Küche und Kinder*—and leave all other jobs to the men folks, and he had a pretty good nerve to pull it even in them days, when

'em over to big greenhorns from Hungary and Poland. Aber to-day yet when over in Germany women is running the street cars, the electric light plants and doing the heavier work that the old fellers of 85 and 90 ain't up to exactly in the rolling mills and foundries, Zapp, if a loyal German subject has to write a letter to the Emperor and finds himself using a word beginning mit a K, y'understand, he tries to think of a substitute word beginning with a Z or a W, so as not to embarrass the poor *Nebich*."

"He should ought to be embarrassed," Zapp said. "A feller which is working the way the Kaiser worked to get every man from 16 to 60 to become a soldier, Birsky, should ought to figure in advance what is going to happen to other businesses besides the soldier business in case his scheme turns out 100 per cent successful. Also, Birsky, if all the men from 16 to 60 is fighting as soldiers and all the women is busy mit churches, cooking and children, Birsky, who did he expect is going to run the street cars and the electric light plants anyway?"

"Listen, Zapp, a feller mit an ism is the last one to expect his scheme is going to turn out 100 per cent successful," Birsky said. "In fact, Zapp, I give the Kaiser credit that when the war happened and he begun to realize what he said and did in the way of militarism to bring it about, y'understand, his feelings toward the whole thing was: 'For the love of Mars, couldn't you take a joke?' Yes, Zapp, all them ism fellers is the same way. When they talk of out-and-out, one hundred per cent Americanism oder Militarism, y'understand me, if something happens where they've got to make good their words, y'understand, they all claim an allowance of fifty per cent discount for enthusiasm."

"Sure I know," Zapp said, "aber the feller mit militarism and Americanism ain't a marker in that respect to the feller mit Socialism. For years already the mayors of cities in Germany, France, England, Austria and Italy has been getting writers' cramp from signing permits for socialists to talk on street corners about how the socialists of the world is going to stand shoulder to shoulder in case of a war, Birsky, and that there would be a general strike and that a socialist was a brother even if he would be a German or an Englishman as the case may be, Birsky, and when the war breaks out, Birsky, what happens? A German socialist shoots an English socialist mit the same enjoyment like the poor feller would be John D. Rockefeller and *vici versa*, and as for standing shoulder to shoulder, Birsky, when Dr. Liebknecht wanted to make good on it, he found that it takes anyhow two socialists to stand shoulder to shoulder, and the last I hear he is sitting in jail in Germany, waiting for a shoulder to come along."

"Well, them socialist fellers was up against an out-and-out, one hundred per cent Germanism, Frenchism and Englishism, Zapp," Birsky said, "and they



"Over in Germany women is running the Street Cars."

couldn't help themselves. The German socialists probably wanted to say that in the trouble with France, there was something to be said in favor of France too, Zapp, aber when the Kaiser shouts 'Germanism consists in utterly believing in the principles of Germany, and putting them principles first above everything,' y'understand, the socialists didn't dasst to figure that maybe France could also got principles. No doubt there was plenty German socialists which had an idea that if the Kaiser had believed in an in-and-out instead of an out-and-out Germanism, consisting of 80 per cent Germanism, 19 per cent Internationalism and one per cent Benzo-Boracid Common Sense, Birsky, a war in Europe might have been avoided, aber because the Kaiser said: 'When the world finally discovers that Germany is indivisible then the world will learn how truly and profoundly great and powerful Germany is,' y'understand, the socialists felt that it wasn't right to disagree with their fellow Germans about it."

"Who told you the Kaiser says such things about Germany?" Zapp demanded.

"Why, you did, didn't you?" Birsky replied.

"Me, I never said no such thing," Zapp cried indignantly. "What you are saying the Kaiser says about Germany was what President Wilson says about America."

"Well what is the difference who says it about what?" Birsky continued. "The results would be the same anyhow, Zapp, aber if President Wilson says or the Kaiser says Americanism or Germanism consists in utterly believing in the principles of all nations, Zapp, and putting them principles first above everything, y'understand, then that gives a couple nations a show to argue about their principles before they go to war over 'em, because there is German principles which is just so good as American principles, Zapp, and there is Mexican principles which ain't so bad neither. Furthermore, Zapp, when Mr. Wilson says what he said about America being indivisible, it's just so easy for a whole nation to be all all-wrong as all all-right."

"Tell me, Birsky," Zapp said, "what are you driving into?"

"I am driving into this, Zapp," Birsky said. "If all that *Stuss* is Americanism when Mr. Wilson and Mr. Hughes says it, what is it when the Kaiser says it?"

"Germanism," Zapp replied. "Then that settles it," Birsky concluded. "It ain't an ism, it's an itis, and the sooner Mr. Wilson and Mr. Hughes gets cured of it, the better. Am I right or wrong?"



"He is now being taken around in a wheel chair."

you, Popper. Why don't you wear it again soon,—say a year from next July 4th? y'understand, it didn't do no good, and he quick passed into the second or speech-making stage of his trouble."

"Speech making always seems to be a symptom that a feller's got an ism the matter with him," Birsky commented.

thousands of German women was not only attending to the church, the cooking and the children, but was also attending to the coal mining, the farming and the street sweeping, not to mention a few hundred other jobs which in America we consider such hard work for a native born citizen, Zapp, that we hand